

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SCA-01 VO-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-15 EB-11 OPIC-12 RSR-01 /117 W

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R 032000Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2534

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 2598

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CVIS JM

SUBJECT: VISAS ALAMO

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE MEDIA ONCE AGAIN ENGAGED IN A CAMPAIGN ON THE VISA ISSUE AND THE U.S. INCURS MAJOR POLITICAL AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COSTS DAILY. IN ADDITION, CONSTANT HARASSMENT ABOUT VISAS UNDERGONE BY OFFICERS AT EVERY LEVEL CRIPPLES THE ABILITY OF THIS MISSION TO CARRY OUT ITS SEVERAL TASKS. EMBASSY HAS FORMED INTERNAL TASK FORCE TO STUDY ALL ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM, AND WELCOMES DEPARTMENT DECISION TO SEND A COUNTERPART TEAM TO KINGSTON TO HELP SEEK SOLUTIONS. WE URGE THAT PROBLEM BE APPROACHED AS A MAJOR POLICY ISSUE RATHER THAN TECHNICAL CONSULAR AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEM, AND THAT A SOUND COURSE OF ACTION ELIMINATING WORST FEATURES OF PRESENT SITUATION FOR NEXT FOUR OR FIVE YEARS BE ADOPTED EVEN AT SOME COST.

END SUMMARY

1. AS THE DE ROULET AFFAIR DRIFTS INTO THE BACKGROUND THE MEDIA HAVE SHIFTED THEIR AIM ONCE AGAIN TO THE VISA PROBLEM IN ALL ITS ASPECTS, AND WE HAVE BEEN UNDERGOING A STEADY DRUMFIRE OF NEWS STORIES, EDITORIALS, COMMENTARIES, AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR. ALLEGATIONS RANGE FROM STATEMENT
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OF FACT THAT OUR FACILITIES PLAINLY INADEQUATE TO HANDLE

NUMBER VISA APPLICANTS IN A DECENT AND HUMANITARIAN WAY TO THE IMPLICATION THAT FAILURE TO GRANT ALL VISA APPLICATIONS SOMEHOW CONSTITUTES VIOLATION OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS, PROBABLY WITH RACIST MOTIVES. CURRENT CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED BY AFTERNOON TABLOID, THE STAR, BUT CUDGELS HAVE NOW BEEN TAKEN UP BY THE MORE SUBSTANTIAL MORNING PAPER, THE DAILY NEWS, AND EVEN THE RESPECTABLE GLEANER IS GETTING IN THE ACT ON A REGULAR BASIS. UNHAPPY FACT IS THAT CAMPAIGN RAISES CIRCULATION WITH COSTS TO NOBODY BUT THE UNITED STATES

2. EMBASSY'S BRIEF COUNTER-CAMPAIGN IN JULY WAS PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL IN GETTING THE FACTS ACROSS AND DULLING THE EDGE OF PUBLIC CRITICISM, BUT ITS FAVORABLE EFFECTS WERE ENGULFED BY THE DE ROULET AFFAIR. INDEED, HAVING EXPENDED THE LITTLE AMMUNITION WE HAD THEN, THE OPERATION COULD NOT NOW BE REPEATED WITH THE SAME IMPACT IN THE ABSENCE OF SOMETHING NEW AND POSITIVE TO SAY.

3. IN ADDITION TO ITS ADVERSE POLITICAL AND PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFECTS, THE VISA PROBLEM HAS A STRONGLY NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE EFFICIENCY AND MORALE OF THIS MISSION AS A WHOLE, LIMITING ITS ABILITY TO CARRY OUT ITS PROGRAMS AND ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVES. OFFICERS AT EVERY LEVEL AND IN EVERY SECTION SPEND A DISPROPORTIONATE AMOUNT OF THEIR TIME AND ENERGY ON VISAS. BOTH AT THEIR DESKS AND AWAY, THEY ARE BELABORED WITH CRITICISM AND BADGERED FOR PREFERMENT BY THEIR CONTACTS AND ASSOCIATES. NATURALLY THEY TEND TO BECOME CAUTIOUS AND DEFENSIVE, AND THEIR ABILITY TO DO THEIR ASSIGNED JOBS IS CRIPPLED. NOR DOES REFUSAL TO BECOME INVOLVED HELP, SINCE THIS IS A SURE-FIRE WAY TO CREATE EX-CONTACTS.

4. CLEARLY THE FUNDAMENTAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL FACTS THAT HAVE CREATED THE VISA PROBLEM ARE BEYOND THE REACH OF THE EMBASSY AS THEY ARE THAT OF THE GOJ. HOWEVER, CREATIVE MANAGEMENT COUPLED WITH SUFFICIENT FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL BACKING FROM THE DEPARTMENT CAN DO MUCH TO AMELIORATE THE WORST FEATURES OF PRESENT SITUATION, ESPECIALLY LACK OF ADEQUATE FACILITIES FOR RECEIVING AND HANDLING VISA APPLICANTS IN A HUMANE AND EFFICIENT MANNER. SHORTLY AFTER MY ARRIVAL I FORMED A TASK FORCE CHAIRED BY CONSUL
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GENERAL WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM POL, ADMIN, AND CONSULAR SECTIONS, AND CHARGED IT WITH STUDYING ALL ASPECTS OF VISA PROBLEM, IDENTIFYING ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES, AND MAKING FIRM RECOMMENDATIONS

5. WE ARE DELIGHTED DEPARTMENT HAS ANTICIPATED US BY FORMING ITS OWN TEAM TO WORK WITH US, AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO ITS ARRIVAL ON AUGUST 14. BY THAT TIME, WE SHOULD HAVE A CLEAR

IDEA OF DIRECTION IN WHICH WE WISH TO MOVE. IN REACHING OUR JOINT CONCLUSIONS, I WOULD HOPE WE CAN FOCUS ON A MEDIUM TERM SOLUTION THAT WILL ELIMINATE WORST FEATURES OF PRESENT SITUATION FOR NEXT FOUR OR FIVE YEARS RATHER THAN BE TEMPTED INTO QUICK-FIX SOLUTIONS THAT MIGHT HELP US THROUGH THIS YEAR BUT BACKFIRE NEXT. FOR EXAMPLE, PRESENT NIV LINE AND CHUTE IMPROVED FLOW OF APPLICANTS AND REDUCED PRESSURE ON CONSULAR OFFICERS, A CRITICAL PROBLEM LAST YEAR, BUT HAS BECOME THE MAJOR CAUSE OF OUR CURRENT POLITICAL AND PUBLIC RELATIONS DIFFICULTIES.

6. ABOVE ALL, I HOPE THAT VISAS PROBLEM CAN BE APPROACHED, AT LEAST IN FIRST INSTANCE, AS A MAJOR POLICY ISSUE RATHER THAN AS A TECHNICAL CONSULAR AND ADMINISTRATIVE QUESTION. ACTION OF PRIME MINISTER MANLEY IN RAISING VISA ISSUE WITH SECRETARY ROGERS DEMONSTRATES GOJ'S SERIOUS CONCERN ABOUT IT, AND POPULARITY OF CURRENT VISA CAMPAIGN IN PRESS SHOWS PUBLIC'S RESPONSE. VISA ISSUE, THROUGH ITS IMPACT ON GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC, HAS A DIRECT BEARING ON THE FUTURE COURSE OF EVENTS WITH RESPECT TO THE LARGEST INTEREST OF THE U.S. IN JAMAICA, OUR HALF BILLION DOLLAR ALUMINUM INVESTMENT AND ITS ATTENDANT OPIC COVERAGE. HEWITT

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